

## **What can a 21<sup>st</sup> century education look like for the students of Kittery?**

### **Historical Context of the Challenge:**

The American Education system is currently under close scrutiny. Recent media releases have publicized the failing test scores, lack of accountability and an antiquated system. Other researchers believe that while the American system needs reform, it is being unfairly blamed for low test scores without acknowledging societal challenges including poverty within communities, substance abuse within homes, an increasing crime rate and an economic strain on households that often leads to transient families. All of these factors affect the ability of a child to come to school ready to learn. Still others challenge the rationale of assessing the quality of education based on standardized test scores. The arguments continue.

Meanwhile, schools find themselves at a crucial point in history. While the research and opinions vary greatly, few educators feel that the status quo is acceptable. American schools can and will improve because the future depends on us doing so. Although opinions vary greatly on how we should best approach reforming the educational system, educators agree that a change is needed.

The current system / structures of most schools across the U.S. was developed in the 1900's and is based on educating an agrarian and industrial society. The calendar in most schools reflects the need for an agricultural society to adapt the school year and the curriculum taught to prepare the factory workers of the future.

The world that students face today is much different from what many of us faced when we entered the work force only 20-30 years ago. Today's students need 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and Traip Academy, like most schools across the U.S. must transform our structures and curriculum to meet this critical challenge.

## **SERC Curriculum Sub-committee Report**

In preparing for the October 2010 presentation, the SERC curriculum sub-committee worked to meet three important goals:

- Review the April 2010 recommendations and provide more details including actions and dates, when appropriate
- Maintain a focus on the transformation to a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum that will meet the needs of today's students
- Provide an aggressive but reasonable time frame for the transformation

The SERC report presented in April 2010 provided twelve general recommendations needed to move the school forward. Those recommendations were as follows:

- Development of a Vision and Action Plan
- An Evaluation of School-wide Progress
- Exploration and Support for Technology
- Professional development
- Timeline for the change process
- Leadership at All Levels
- Professional Learning and Development
- Development of new faculty evaluation plan
- Assessment Of and For Student Learning
- Student Involvement
- Parent and Community Advisory Council
- Marketing
- Budget Considerations

The report presented to the school committee on October 5, 2010 expands upon these recommendations and provides specific actions and dates, when appropriate. Please view the PowerPoint posted on the Kittery School Department website ([www.kitteryschools.org](http://www.kitteryschools.org)) for more information.

## **Planning for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education**

The committee also believes that the School Department has an obligation to educate the community about what 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills are and how they will be implemented. The framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning includes the four key components:

- Core Subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Themes
  - Includes core academic subjects (English, reading, arts,

science, mathematics, world languages, etc. AND interdisciplinary topics including global awareness, health environmental and financial literacy

- Learning and Innovation Skills
  - Includes critical thinking/problem solving, creativity, communication and collaboration
- Information, Media and Technology Skills
  - Includes information and media literacy
- Life and Career Skills
  - Includes social and cross-cultural skills, productivity, flexibility and initiative

We believe that these components represent what is needed as students prepare for a future much different than the past. We encourage you to visit the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills website ([www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org)) to learn more.

### **Making the Transformation**

Many high-performing traditional high schools exist in the state of Maine and across the country. We do not recommend that Traip transform itself into a higher performing traditional high school. We do recommend that we take this opportunity to transform the current Traip Academy into what every high school should become.

There are some exemplary programs and schools in New England that are working towards developing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. The staff at Traip Academy has visited and will be visiting several of these programs to watch, listen and learn from their experiences, including the following schools:

- Alvirne High School (community connections)
- Casco Bay High School (expeditionary learning)
- Renaissance School (expeditionary learning)
- Yarmouth High School (information, media and technology skills)
- Cranston East High School (service learning)
- Milton Vermont High School (interdisciplinary learning and use of technology)
- Big Picture South Burlington (learning in the real world)

Staff members will be sharing what they learn from each visit with the entire Traip staff and the school committee. Based on the site visits, input from the Traip Advisory Council and feedback from community forums, the administration and staff will develop plans for a new Traip Academy curriculum and structure, with the goal of presenting the recommendations to the School Committee in the spring of 2011. We anticipate that the new system may not look exactly like any one of the schools visited, but rather a hybrid of best structures and practices based on our research and exploration.

### **Time and Money~ Important Considerations**

It is crucial that we consider both the aggressive timeline and the budgetary implications of our programs. The SERC curriculum committee has recommended that the new program be planned and ready to be incorporated into the school budget and master planning by the spring of 2011. We recommend that the structures, professional development support and initial implementation steps are in place for the 2011-12 school year and school-wide implementation begins in 2012-13.

The committee understands the financial restraints in place due to the current economic situation. Keeping that in mind, the committee recommends that the School Department consider reallocation of funds and explore grant opportunities while maintaining the current level of for Traip Academy.

### **Final Thoughts**

In closing, the SERC curriculum sub-committee believes that the current challenge presents an outstanding opportunity for Traip Academy. The work ahead will be challenging, but rewarding, as we prepare the students of Kittery to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

